

### *National Taxpayers Union, Citizens Against Government Waste Support Anti-Pay Raise Bill*

**WASHINGTON** - The National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste yesterday endorsed U.S. Reps. Harry Mitchell and Ron Paul's bipartisan bill to block the automatic pay raise members of Congress are currently set to receive in Fiscal Year 2011.

H.R. 4255, the Stop the Automatic Pay Raise for Members of Congress in FY2011 Act, would require members to forgo their scheduled Fiscal Year 2011 pay raise.

"Last year, after introducing similar legislation, Representative Mitchell was successful in convincing Congress to forego an automatic pay raise," said Jordan Forbes of the conservative National Taxpayers Union. "Given the current economic climate, it is inexcusable for Congress to pad its already sizeable compensation package as our nation continues to face 10 percent unemployment."

Thomas A. Schatz, President of Citizens Against Government Waste, added "While millions of Americans continue to flounder under the current economic downturn, it would be unconscionable for members of Congress to award themselves a pay raise."

In addition to the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste, H.R. 4255 has earned broad bipartisan support in Congress. Over 100 members of the U.S. House of Representatives have signed on as cosponsors of the bill.

"I'm glad the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste support our effort to block the Congressional pay raise," said Mitchell. "In these tough economic times, with unemployment so high and so many families struggling to make ends meet, it's clear that Congress needs to focus on getting people back to work, shoring up the economy, and keeping our families and communities safe - not on giving ourselves a raise."

In 1989, Congress approved a process that provides lawmakers with an automatic pay raise unless they vote specifically to reject the raise.

Last year, Mitchell and Paul led a successful effort to block the FY 2010 pay raise. After introducing similar legislation, H.R. 156, which garnered 118 cosponsors, House Leadership announced that Members of Congress would not receive an anticipated \$4,700 raise in 2009. The move saved taxpayers approximately \$2.5 million. [Source: [The Hill](#), February 24, 2009]

In 2007 and 2008, Mitchell also introduced legislation to block pay raises which did not reach the floor of the House for a vote. When Mitchell received pay increases over his objection, in FY2008 and FY2009, he donated his pay raises to Arizona charities. [Source: [East Valley Tribune](#), April 16, 2009]

The projected amount of the January 2011 automatic pay adjustment is expected to be determined at the end of the month through a formula using the Employment Cost Index. It is based on the Index's percentage change reflected in the quarter ending December 31 for the two preceding years, minus 0.5%. Currently, pay for a Member of Congress is \$174,000.

Below is the full text of the letters of support from the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste:

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 362,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to cosponsor Representative Harry Mitchell's bipartisan legislation (H.R. 4255) that would prevent an automatic pay increase for Members of Congress in 2011.

Rank-and-file Members of Congress currently make an annual salary of \$174,000 (nearly double the median household income of about \$90,000 for the Washington, D.C. metro area, including wealthy suburbs). This sum does not include taxpayer funds used for lavish pensions, health plans, and generous allowances for travel, staff, and office expenses. Given the current economic climate, it is inexcusable for Congress to pad its already sizeable compensation package as our nation continues to face 10 percent unemployment.

How did this auto-pilot pay raise system come about? As explained by Pete Sepp in the NTU Foundation Policy Paper "Congressional Perks: How the Trappings of Office Trap Taxpayers," it did not start out this way:

According to Article I of the U.S. Constitution, compensation paid to Members of Congress "shall be ascertained by law." The Founding Fathers intended Congress to set its own pay through the appropriations process, on the supposition that Members would be guided by their own sense of honor. In fact, lawmakers lived without a yearly salary up until 1854, having contented themselves prior to that time with a per-diem system that paid a flat rate for each day Congress was in session.

But thanks to a series of post-World War II measures, culminating in a 1989 "ethics" law, Members of Congress have sought to avoid accountability for salary hikes. Annual pay raises are now tied to the Labor Department's Employment Cost Index:

COLAs [Cost of Living Adjustments] now take effect once the TTHUD bill [or in recent years the Financial Services Appropriations Bill] becomes law, although taxpayers would never be able to identify any language in the bill that appears to authorize these pay grabs. Members of Congress would need to specifically vote on, or insert, language blocking the raise if they do not want the increase to occur. Taxpayers are thus condemned to fight a bizarre annual battle over a COLA whose existence is only recognized when Congress opts to block it.

Last year, after introducing similar legislation, Representative Mitchell was successful in convincing Congress to forego an automatic pay raise of \$4,700 for 2010. This saved taxpayers approximately \$2.5 million. These same taxpayers are counting on you to take such a stance again this year by cosponsoring H.R. 4255 and directing the resulting savings toward reducing the deficit.

Sincerely,

Jordan Forbes  
Federal Government Affairs Manager

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the more than one million members and supporters of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW), I urge you to support H.R. 4255, the Stop the Automatic Pay Raise for Members of Congress in Fiscal Year 2011 Act. This bill, sponsored by Reps. Harry Mitchell (D-Ariz.) and Ron Paul (R-Texas), would prevent members of Congress from receiving an automatic pay adjustment next year.

Congress has allowed the unemployment rate to hover at 10 percent with little sign of relief, as the national debt has soared to an unprecedented \$12.3 trillion. While millions of Americans continue to flounder under the current economic downturn, it would be unconscionable for members of Congress to award themselves a pay raise.

Last year, Congress passed H.R. 156, the Stop the Congressional Pay Raise Act for Fiscal Year 2010, successfully halting this year's automatic salary bump. Supporting H.R. 4255 for Fiscal Year 2011 would emphasize Congress's commitment to cut at least one unnecessary expenditure during this economic crisis.

I strongly urge you to support H.R. 4255 and to work toward securing its passage. All votes on H.R. 4255 will be among those considered in CCAGW's *2010 Congressional Ratings*.

Sincerely,  
Thomas A. Schatz